imaginations to a kind of momentary jollity, by the help of wine and riot, and consider it as the first business of the night to stupify recollection, and lay that reason asleep which disturbs their gayety, and calls upon them to retreat from ruin.

But this poor broken satisfaction is of short continuance, and must be expiated by a long series of misery and regret. In a short time the creditor grows impatient, the last acre is sold, the passions and appetites still continue their tyranny, with incessant calls for their usual gratifications, and the remainder of life passes away in vain repentance, or impotent desire.

Numb. 54. Saturday, *September* 22, 1750.

Truditur dies die,
Novæque pergunt interire lunæ;
Tu secanda marmora
Locas sub ipsum funus, et sepulchri
Immemor struis domos. Hor.

To the RAMBLER.

SIR,

I HAVE lately been called, from a mingled life of business and amusement, to attend

tend the laſt hours of an old friend; an office which has filled me, if not with melancholy, at leaſt with ſerious reflexions, and turned my thoughts towards the contemplation of thoſe ſubjects, which, though of the utmoſt importance, and of indubitable certainty, are generally ſecluded from our regard, by the jollity of health, the hurry of employment, and even by the calmer diverſions of ſtudy and ſpeculation; or if they become accidental topics of converſation and argument, yet rarely ſink deep into the heart, but give occaſion only to ſome ſubtilties of reaſoning, or ſome elegancies of declamation, which are heard, applauded, and forgotten.

It is, indeed, not hard to conceive how a man accuſtomed to extend his views through a long concatenation of cauſes and effects, to trace things from their origin to their period, and compare means with ends, may diſcover the weakneſs of human ſchemes; detect the fallacies by which we are deluded; ſhew the inſufficiency of wealth, honours, and power, to real happineſs; and pleaſe himſelf, and his auditors with learned lectures on the vanity of life.

BUT

But though the speculatist may see and shew the folly of terrestrial hopes, fears, and desires, every hour will give proofs that he never felt it. Trace him through the paths of life, and you will find him acting upon principles which he has in common with unenlightened mortals, angry and pleased like the lowest of the vulgar, persuing, with the same ardor, the same designs, grasping, with all the eagerness of transport, those riches which he knows he cannot keep, and swelling with the applause which he has gained by proving that applause is of no value.

The only conviction which rushes upon the soul, and takes away from our appetites and passions the power of resistance, is to be found, where I have received it, at the bed of a dying friend. To enter the school of wisdom is not the peculiar privilege of geometricians; the most sublime and important precepts require no uncommon opportunities, nor laborious preparations, they are enforced without the aid of eloquence, and understood without skill in analytic science. Every tongue can utter them, and every understanding can conceive them. He that wishes in

earnest

earneſt to obtain juſt ſentiments concerning his condition, he that would be intimately acquainted with the world, may find inſtructions on every ſide; he that deſires to enter behind the ſcene, which every art has been employed to decorate, and every paſſion labours to illuminate, and to ſee life ſtripped of thoſe ornaments which make it glitter on the ſtage, and expoſed in its natural meanneſs, impotence, and nakedneſs, may find all the deluſion laid open in the chamber of diſeaſe; he will there find vanity diveſted of her robes, power deprived of her ſceptre, and hypocriſy without her maſk.

The friend whom I have loſt was a man eminent for genius, and, like others of the ſame claſs, ſufficiently pleaſed with acceptance and applauſe. Being careſſed by thoſe who have preferments and riches in their diſpoſal, he conſidered himſelf as in the direct road of advancement, and had caught the flame of ambition by approaches to its object. But in the midſt of his hopes, his projects, and his gayeties, he was ſeized by a lingering diſeaſe, which, from its firſt ſtage, he knew to be incurable. Here was an end of all his viſions of greatneſs and happineſs; from the firſt

hour

hour that his health declined, all his former pleaſures grew taſteleſs. His friends expected to pleaſe him by thoſe accounts of the growth of his reputation, which were formerly certain of being well received; but they ſoon found how little he was now affected by compliments, and how vainly they attempted, by flattery, to exhilarate the languor of weakneſs, and relieve the ſolicitude of approaching death. Whoever would know how much piety and virtue ſurpaſs all external goods, might here have ſeen them weighed againſt each other, where all that gives motion to the active, and elevation to the eminent, all that ſparkles in the eye of hope, and pants in the boſom of ſuſpicion, at once became duſt in the balance, without weight and without regard. Riches, authority, and praiſe, loſe all their influence when they are conſidered as riches which to-morrow ſhall be beſtow'd upon another, authority which ſhall this night expire for ever, and praiſe which, however merited, or however ſincere, ſhall, after a few moments, be heard no more.

In thoſe hours of ſeriouſneſs and wiſdom, nothing appeared to raiſe his ſpirits, or gladden his heart, but the recollection of acts of goodneſs,

goodneſs, nor to excite his attention but ſome opportunity for the exerciſe of the duties of religion. Every thing that terminated on this ſide of the grave was received with coldneſs and indifference, and regarded rather in conſequence of the habit of valuing it, than from any opinion that it deſerved value; it had little more prevalence over his mind than a bubble that was now broken, a dream from which he was awake. His whole powers were engroſſed by the conſideration of another ſtate, and all converſation was tedious, that had not ſome tendency to diſengage him from human affairs, and open his proſpects into eternity.

IT is now paſt, we have cloſed his eyes, and heard him breathe the groan of expiration. At the ſight of this laſt conflict, I felt a ſenſation never known to me before; a confuſion of paſſions, an awful ſtilneſs of ſorrow, a gloomy terrour without a name. The thoughts that entered my ſoul were too ſtrong to be diverted, and too piercing to be endured; but ſuch violence cannot be laſting, the ſtorm ſubſided in a ſhort time, I wept, retired, and grew calm.

I HAVE

I have from that time frequently revolved in my mind, the effects which the obfervation of death produces, in thofe who are not wholly without the power and ufe of reflexion; for by far the greater part it feems to be wholly unregarded. Their friends and their enemies fink into the grave without raifing any uncommon emotion, or reminding them that they are themfelves on the edge of the precipice, and that they muft foon plunge into the gulph of eternity.

It feems to me remarkable that death increafes our veneration for the good, and extenuates our hatred of the bad. Thofe virtues which once we envied, as Horace obferves, becaufe they eclipfed our own, can now no longer obftruct our reputation, and we have therefore no intereft to fupprefs their praife. That wickednefs, which we feared for its malignity, is now become impotent, and the man whofe name filled us with alarm, and rage, and indignation, can at laft be confidered only with pity, or contempt.

When a friend is carried to his grave, we at once find excufes for every weaknefs, and palliations

liations of every fault; we recollect a thousand endearments, which before glided off our minds without impression, a thousand favours unrepaid, a thousand duties unperformed, and wish, vainly wish for his return, not so much that we may receive, as that we may bestow happiness, and recompense that kindness which before we never understood.

THERE is not, perhaps, to a mind well instructed, a more painful occurrence, than the death of one whom we have injured without reparation. Our crime seems now irretrievable, it is indelibly recorded, and the stamp of fate is fixed upon it. We consider, with the most afflictive anguish, the pain which we have given, and now cannot alleviate, and the losses which we have caused, and now cannot compensate.

OF the same kind are the emotions which the death of an emulator or competitor produces. Whoever had qualities to alarm our jealousy, had excellence to deserve our fondness, and to whatever ardor opposition of interest may enflame us, no man ever outlived an enemy, whom he did not then wish to have made a friend. Those who are versed in literary

terary hiſtory know that the elder Scaliger was the redoubted antagoniſt of Cardan and Eraſmus; yet at the death of each of his great rivals he relented, and complained that they were ſnatched away from him before their reconciliation was completed.

Tu-ne etiam moreris? Ah! quid me linquis, Eraſme,
Ante meus quam ſit conciliatus amor?

SUCH are the ſentiments with which we at laſt review the effects of paſſion, but which we ſometimes delay till we can no longer rectify our errors. Let us therefore make haſte to do what we ſhall certainly at laſt wiſh to have done; let us return the careſſes of our friends, and endeavour by mutual endearments to heighten that tenderneſs which is the balm of life. Let us be quick to repent of injuries while repentance may not be a barren anguiſh, and let us open our eyes to every rival excellence, and pay early and willingly thoſe honours which juſtice will compel us to pay at laſt.

ATHANATUS.